

NEWS

Depot firefighters prepare for high-level emergencies



Lance Cpl. Justin J. Shemanski

**Firefighter Tim Shelton prepares to rappel off a building during training at the WFTBn. barracks May 13. The firefighters go through 24 hours of training each year to make sure they can safely perform various rope systems when conducting certain types of rescues.**

**LANCE CPL.  
JUSTIN J. SHEMANSKI**  
*STAFF WRITER*

Hooked up, latched on and ready to go, firefighters from the Parris Island Fire Department went through their annual Height and Confined Spaces Training aboard the Depot May 10-15.

Gregory Scott Millsap Training Associates, a group comprised of fire service professionals from the Atlanta area, packed up their gear and headed for Parris Island to hold a 24-hour refresher course for the two shifts of firefighters stationed here.

“We’re here because firefighters are required to learn certain types of techniques in order to do their job in a safe and efficient manner,” said Firefighter Barry Hopper, co-owner of GSM Training. “If someone’s on top of a burning building you must know a way to get them down and that’s one of the scenarios we are going through in this course. They don’t do these types of things on a day-to-day basis, so it’s nice for them to have these classes so they have these methods fresh in their minds should the need arise.”

Each shift goes through 24 hours worth of training, in which GSM instructors explain all the necessary methods used to perform a rescue in anything but ideal situations.

“One of the main things we go through is how to work a rope ... how to gain a mechanical advan-

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tage off a rope based system, which will make their job a lot easier,” explains Hopper, a 15-year veteran of the business. “Out on a scene, they aren’t going to have this many folks. They have to be able to work efficiently with limited equipment and limited manpower, so that’s our goal. To make sure that they know how to do it safely in the time we give to them during the exercises.”

As Hopper noted, ropes and knots are of big importance when conducting certain types of rescues. In a situation where going out a barrack’s window may be the only way out, a rope system may be the only option. Many knots and rigs will be utilized in order to make an operation like this possible.

According to GSM’s Training Manual, it encourages a firefighter to master a few knots capable of addressing most situations he or she may encounter, rather than learning too many knots that all serve the same purpose. This will allow a firefighter to perform a rescue faster, rather than thinking about which knot or system will be best for the situation at hand.

“A situation on base where we

would use this kind of knowledge could be when a [recruit] gets stuck or hung up on the rappel tower,” said Lt. Joey Ramsey, driver operator with the PIFD. “The easiest way to get them down is not to take them down the steps, but to send one of us up there to get them back down the side. It’s good to know this kind of thing ... as far as I know we are the only ones on this base that are trained to handle a situation like that.”

Hopper also feels very strongly about going through this yearly training with the PIFD, stating, “it only seems right.”

“Who else on the base is going to be able to do this type of thing,” he said. “The fire department is an obvious choice because they already have the paramedics, who would be on the scene anyway, so why not train them to perform the rescue as well.”

As for having to go through the training every year, Ramsey said it is great because they learn something new every time.

“There’s always different rigs and different set ups ... easier and faster ways to get the job done safely, and that’s what we’re all about,” he said.

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According to the Marine Corps Order, each rider must have a Department of Transportation approved helmet, shatter/impact resistant goggles or a face shield, hard-soled shoes with heels (leather boots or over the ankle shoes are encouraged), full-fingered gloves, a properly worn long-sleeved shirt or jacket, long-legged trousers and a commercially available vest that is bright yellow, international orange or lime green with two 1.5 to 2 inch wide vertical or horizontal retro reflective strips front and back.

Failure to follow the terms set within the order is subject to punitive actions under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Compliance with these guidelines apply not only to the operator, but also to any passenger aboard the vehicle.

“It is spring time and a lot of new riders buy motorcycles, and we wanted to provide some refresher training with regards to PPE requirements,” said Staff Sgt. Wayne Reeves, 3rd RTBn. S-4 chief and one of four instructors for the Motorcycle Safety Course. “We get a lot of Marines that are getting hurt because the Marine is being a knucklehead.”

Any service member who did not have a safe frame of mind coming into the brief was quickly turned around. Right at

the start, Wooten threw out statistics that bring some reality to the safety issues.

“Out of 19 accidents that occurred Marine Corps wide [from May 2-8], four involved motorcycles,” said Wooten. “That includes HMMWV rollovers or any accident where a Marine was hurt on or off duty. That is a pretty big percentage when you consider that there is a lot of activity going on.”

With 75 percent of motorcycle accidents involving a passenger vehicle and in 66 percent of those, the car violated the motorcycles right of way, Wooten put a special emphasis on being in the know when it comes to how to ride and what to wear.

“The big thing with motorcycles is that it’s different than driving a car,” said Wooten.

Wooten added that when he rides he is always aware of the ever-present dangers, and that those dangers are a good reason for any rider to develop good safety habits.

“Being in over your head,” does not mean just knowing the rules of the road or wearing the proper gear. It also means being smart while riding and gaining the experience before trying to tackle a larger motorcycle.

“The biggest trend is that being Marines, we are invincible in our minds, and we go out and buy a bike that your buddy has and try to keep up with him,” said Reeves. “That is where a lot of guys are getting in

trouble.”

One way for a service member to gain that experience is to go through the safety course offered aboard the Depot. A strong reason for people to take the course lies in the facts. In 92 percent of accidents involving motorcycles, the rider had no formal training.

“For Marines that haven’t attended the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Safety Riders Course, it is a free course for anyone who works on the base, whether that be active duty or civilian employees,” said Reeves.

For more information on motorcycle safety, call the Depot Safety Office, 228-3345 or refer to Marine Corps Order 5100.19E.

**Motorcycle Safety Facts:**

- In recent years, the number of users wearing helmets dropped from 71 percent to 58 percent nationally.
- Helmets have proven to be more than 37 percent effective in preventing rider fatalities, which reduces the risk of a fatality by one third.
- Over a ten-year period from 1993 through 2002, motorcycle helmets have saved 7,808 lives.
- Weather is not a factor in 98 percent of motorcycle accidents.
- Most motorcycle accidents involve a short trip associated with shopping errands, friends entertainment or recreation, and usually happens within close proximity to the trip origin.

PMI of the Week ...



Sgt. Amanda Garcia

**Primary Marksmanship Instructor Sgt. William P. Tinney helped qualify 97.6 percent of the recruits from Platoon 3048, Kilo Co., 3rd RTBn., making him the PMI of the week. The platoon achieved an average shooting score of 210.7.**

Make A 

The Parris Island Pool  
opens Memorial Day  
Weekend!



Call 228-7336 to find out more